



Tom Rasmussen
Seattle City Councilmember

May 29, 2009

Greetings,

I am proposing an amendment to the Land Use Code to permit the expansion of existing medical offices in Highrise zones in certain limited circumstances. The only area in Seattle zoned Highrise is on First Hill, just east of downtown. The Highrise zone currently permits residential towers up to 240 feet tall. It also permits small (4,000 square feet or less) commercial uses such as stores, offices, and restaurants, on the ground floor of residential buildings.

The purpose of my amendment is to allow the expansion of existing medical offices that are located on the edge of the Highrise zone. Medical offices provide necessary services to Seattle residents, and also contribute to the economy by providing family-wage jobs. My proposal recognizes the benefits of medical offices while setting conditions that minimize possible impacts on the surrounding neighborhood.

For example, medical office expansion would not be permitted if it would displace housing, or if it is part of a hospital. In addition, the expansion would be permitted only as an "administrative conditional use". Administrative conditional uses must be approved by the Director of the Department of Planning and Development (DPD), whose decision is appealable to the City's Hearing Examiner. Design review would also be required. My intent is to provide a robust public review process that ensures community input.

The proposal provides specific development standards for medical office expansion, which would not be permitted to go above 108 feet in height. Twenty-five percent of the area of the lot would be required to be landscaped open space, and setbacks and floor size limits would apply. I have attached a copy of the proposed Land Use Code amendment for your review and comment.

I believe that the proposal will support needed services and jobs while ensuring that any permitted medical office expansion will be a good neighbor to the First Hill community. The Planning, Land Use and Neighborhoods Committee of the City Council will be holding a public hearing on the proposed amendment on June 22, 2009 at 5:30 p.m. at City Hall, and I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Tom Rasmussen
Seattle City Council

Attachment: Proposed Land Use Code amendment